

Appl. No. : 10/063,557
Filed : May 2, 2002

REMARKS

The foregoing amendments to the claims are of formal nature, and do not add new matter. Claims 1-6 were pending in this application and were rejected on various grounds. Claim 1 has been amended, and Claim 6 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer for pursuit of their subject matter in latter continuation or divisional filings. Claims 1-5 are therefore present for further examination. The rejections to the presently pending claims are respectfully traversed.

The changes made to the Specification and Claims by the current amendment, including deletions and additions, are shown herein with deletions designated with a strikethrough and additions underlined.

Specification

The disclosure was objected to by the Examiner as containing embedded hyperlinks. The specification has been amended to delete these hyperlinks.

Oath/Declaration

The Examiner found the Declaration submitted with the application to be defective, as it fails to identify the citizenship of each inventor. Specifically, for Mary E. Gerritsen and Audrey Goddard, the citizenship is allegedly unclear because "CA" is not a recognized country. In fact, "CA" is the two-letter country code for Canada. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has developed widely-recognized and internationally accepted two-letter codes for every country in the world. Applicants submit that "CA" is the well-known and widely accepted code for Canada, and therefore the Declaration is acceptable as filed.

Correction of Inventorship under 37 CFR §1.48(b)

Applicant requests that several inventors be deleted, as these inventors' inventions are no longer being claimed in the present application as a result of prosecution. The fee as set forth in § 1.17(i) is submitted herewith.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 101 and § 112, 1st Paragraph

The Examiner rejected Claims 1-6 as lacking either a specific and substantial asserted utility or a well-established utility under 35 U.S.C. § 101. Claims 1-6 are further rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph. According to the Examiner, since the claimed invention is not supported by either a specific and substantial asserted utility or a well established utility, one skilled in the art would not know how to use the claimed invention. Applicants respectfully disagree with and traverse these rejections.

Appl. No. : 10/063,557
Filed : May 2, 2002

The Examiner asserts that the utility and enablement of the antibody depends upon whether or not the polypeptide it binds has utility and enablement. Since the protein of the invention, PRO1069, allegedly is not supported by a specific and substantial asserted utility or well-established utility, and is not enabled, the antibodies to this polypeptide also lack utility and enablement.

Utility – Legal Standard

According to the Utility Examination Guidelines (“Utility Guidelines”), 66 Fed. Reg. 1092 (2001) an invention complies with the utility requirement of 35 U.S.C. § 101, if it has at least one asserted “specific, substantial, and credible utility” or a “well-established utility.”

Under the Utility Guidelines, a utility is “specific” when it is particular to the subject matter claimed. For example, it is generally not enough to state that a nucleic acid is useful as a diagnostic without also identifying the condition that is to be diagnosed.

The requirement of “substantial utility” defines a “real world” use, and derives from the Supreme Court’s holding in *Brenner v. Manson*, 383 U.S. 519, 534 (1966) stating that “The basic *quid pro quo* contemplated by the Constitution and the Congress for granting a patent monopoly is the benefit derived by the public from an invention with substantial utility.” In explaining the “substantial utility” standard, M.P.E.P. § 2107.01 cautions, however, that Office personnel must be careful not to interpret the phrase “immediate benefit to the public” or similar formulations used in certain court decisions to mean that products or services based on the claimed invention must be “currently available” to the public in order to satisfy the utility requirement. “Rather, *any reasonable use that an applicant has identified for the invention that can be viewed as providing a public benefit should be accepted as sufficient*, at least with regard to defining a ‘substantial’ utility.” (M.P.E.P. § 2107.01, emphasis added.)

Indeed, the Guidelines for Examination of Applications for Compliance With the Utility Requirement, set forth in M.P.E.P. § 2107 II(B)(1) gives the following instruction to patent examiners: “If the applicant has asserted that the claimed invention is useful for any particular practical purpose ... and the assertion would be considered credible by a person of ordinary skill in the art, do not impose a rejection based on lack of utility.”

Utility – Evidentiary Standard

An Applicant's assertion of utility creates a presumption of utility that will be sufficient to satisfy the utility requirement of 35 U.S.C. § 101, “unless there is a reason for one skilled in the

Appl. No. : 10/063,557
Filed : May 2, 2002

art to question the objective truth of the statement of utility or its scope." *In re Langer*, 503 F.2d 1380, 1391, 183 USPQ 288, 297 (CCPA 1974). See, also *In re Jolles*, 628 F.2d 1322, 206 USPQ 885 (CCPA 1980); *In re Irons*, 340 F.2d 974, 144 USPQ 351 (1965); *In re Sichert*, 566 F.2d 1154, 1159, 196 USPQ 209, 212-13 (CCPA 1977).

Compliance with 35 U.S.C. § 101 is a question of fact. *Raytheon v. Roper*, 724 F.2d 951, 956, 220 USPQ 592, 596 (Fed. Cir. 1983) cert. denied, 469 US 835 (1984). The evidentiary standard to be used throughout *ex parte* examination in setting forth a rejection is a preponderance of the totality of the evidence under consideration. *In re Oetiker*, 977 F.2d 1443, 1445, 24 USPQ2d 1443, 1444 (Fed. Cir. 1992). Thus, to overcome the presumption of truth that an assertion of utility by the applicant enjoys, the PTO must establish that it is more likely than not that one of ordinary skill in the art would doubt the truth of the statement of utility. Only after the PTO has made a proper *prima facie* showing of lack of utility does the burden of rebuttal shift to the applicant. The issue will then be decided on the totality of evidence.

Substantial Utility

The PTO argues that the invention lacks specific and substantial utility because there is no necessary correlation between a specific disease state and the expression of the PRO1069 polypeptide. The utility of the claimed antibody depends upon whether or not the polypeptide it binds has utility and enablement. According to the PTO, the invention lacks any "real world" context of use for PRO1069 proteins and antibodies.

The claims are directed to antibodies that bind to SEQ ID NO:50 (encoding PRO1069). The specification, in Example 18, discloses that the nucleic acid encoding PRO1069 (DNA59211-1450) is more highly expressed in normal kidney as compared to kidney tumor.

As an initial matter, Applicants rely on the gene expression data for patentable utility for this case, which was first disclosed in PCT/US00/23328, filed August 24, 2000. Applicants have properly claimed and are entitled to the priority of the effective filing date of August 24, 2000. As will be apparent from the discussions below and the supporting evidence, Applicants submit that the gene expression data provide specific and substantial asserted utility for the PR1069 polypeptide and the claimed antibodies. Since this utility was disclosed in PCT/US00/23328 on page 93, line 3, through page 96, line 35, the claims pending are fully entitled to the priority of August 24, 2000.

Appl. No. : 10/063,557
Filed : May 2, 2002

The gene expression data in Example 18 was obtained using standard semi-quantitative PCR amplification reactions with cDNA libraries isolated from different human tumor and normal human tissue samples and analyzed by agarose gel electrophoresis so as to obtain a semi-quantitative determination of the level of expression of the PRO polypeptide-encoding nucleic acid in each reaction. Identification of the differential expression of the PRO polypeptide-encoding nucleic acid in one or more tumor tissues as compared to one or more normal tissues of the same tissue type rendered the molecule useful diagnostically for the determination of the presence or absence of tumor in a subject suspected of possessing a tumor, as well as therapeutically, as a target for the treatment of a tumor in a subject possessing such a tumor. Applicants submit herewith the declaration of J. Christopher Grimaldi, an expert in the field of cancer biology as Exhibit A. This declaration explains the importance of the data in Example 18, and how differential gene and protein expression studies are used to differentiate between normal tissue and tumor tissue (see Declaration, paragraph 7).

Applicants further submit that it is generally well-understood in the art that in the majority of cases, gene expression correlates with levels of protein expression. In support of Applicants' position, Applicants submit herewith a second declaration of J. Christopher Grimaldi as Exhibit B. As stated in paragraph 5 of this declaration, "Those who work in this field are well aware that in the vast majority of cases, when a gene is over-expressed...the gene product or polypeptide will also be over-expressed.... This same principal applies to gene under-expression." Further, "the detection of increased mRNA expression is expected to result in increased polypeptide expression, and the detection of decreased mRNA expression is expected to result in decreased polypeptide expression. The detection of increased or decreased polypeptide expression can be used for cancer diagnosis and treatment." The references cited in the declaration and submitted herewith support this statement.

Scientists regularly rely on the results of gene expression to point the way to differential protein expression in disease and, in this case, cancer. Submitted herewith as Exhibit C is the declaration of Dr. Paul Polakis, principal investigator of the Tumor Antigen Project of Genentech, Inc., the assignee of the present application. As Dr. Polakis explains, the primary focus of the microarray project was to identify tumor cell markers useful as targets for both the diagnosis and treatment of cancer in humans. The scientists working on the project extensively rely on results of microarray experiments in their effort to identify such markers. As Dr. Polakis

Appl. No. : 10/063,557
Filed : May 2, 2002

explains, using microarray analysis, Genentech scientists have identified approximately 200 gene transcripts (mRNAs) that are present in human tumor cells at significantly higher levels than in corresponding normal human cells. To date, they have generated antibodies that bind to about 30 of the tumor antigen proteins expressed from these differentially expressed gene transcripts and have used these antibodies to quantitatively determine the level of production of these tumor antigen proteins in both human cancer cells and corresponding normal cells. Having compared the levels of mRNA and protein in both the tumor and normal cells analyzed, they found a very good correlation between mRNA and corresponding protein levels. Specifically, in approximately 80% of their observations they have found that increases in the level of a particular mRNA correlates with changes in the level of protein expressed from that mRNA. While the proper legal standard is to show that the existence of correlation between mRNA and polypeptide levels is more likely than not, the showing of approximately 80% correlation for the molecules tested in the Polakis Declaration greatly exceeds this legal standard. Based on these experimental data and his vast scientific experience of more than 20 years, Dr. Polakis states that, for human genes, increased mRNA levels typically correlate with an increase in abundance of the encoded protein. He further confirms that "it remains a central dogma in molecular biology that increased mRNA levels are predictive of corresponding increased levels of the encoded protein."

Additional references support this position. For example, Orntoft et al. (submitted herewith) studied transcript levels of 5600 genes in malignant bladder cancers which were linked to a gain/loss of chromosomal material using an array-based method. Orntoft et al. showed that there was a gene dosage effect and teach that "in general (18 of 23 cases) chromosomal areas with more than 2-fold gain of DNA showed a corresponding increase in mRNA transcripts" (see column 1, abstract). In addition, Hyman et al. (submitted herewith) showed, using CGH analysis and cDNA microarrays to compare DNA copy numbers and mRNA expression of over 12,000 genes in breast cancer tumors and cell lines, that there is "evidence of a prominent global influence of copy number changes on gene expression levels" (see page 6244, column 1, last paragraph). Additional supportive teachings are also provided by Pollack et al. (submitted herewith) who studied a series of primary human breast tumors and found that "...62% of highly amplified genes show moderately or highly elevated expression, that DNA copy number influences gene expression across a wide range of DNA copy number alterations (deletion, low-, mid- and high-level amplification), that on average, a 2-fold change in DNA copy number is

Appl. No. : 10/063,557
Filed : May 2, 2002

associated with a corresponding 1.5-fold change in mRNA levels" (see column 1, abstract). Thus, these articles collectively teach that in general, gene over-expression correspondingly increases mRNA expression.

Taken together, despite some teachings in the art of certain genes that do not fit within this paradigm which are exceptions rather than the rule, in the vast majority of cases, the combined teachings in the art, exemplified by Orntoft et al., Hyman et al. and Pollack et al. and the Grimaldi and Polakis declarations, overwhelmingly teach that gene expression influences protein levels. Thus, one of skill in the art would reasonably expect, in this instance, based on the gene expression data for the PRO1069 gene, that the PRO1069 protein is concomitantly under-expressed in kidney tumor. Thus, Applicants submit that the PRO1069 protein and the antibodies against this protein have utility in the diagnosis of cancer and based on such a utility, one of skill in the art would know exactly how to use these molecules.

Claimed antibodies would have diagnostic utility even if the protein were not under-expressed

Even assuming *arguendo* that there is no correlation between gene expression and decreased protein expression for PRO1069, which Applicants submit is not true, an antibody to a polypeptide encoded by a gene that is under-expressed in cancer would still have a credible, specific and substantial utility. In support, Applicants submit herewith as Exhibit D the Declaration of Avi Ashkenazi, Ph.D., an expert in the field of cancer biology. Although Dr. Ashkenazi's Declaration focuses on gene and protein over-expression, these same principles apply to gene and protein under-expression. Dr. Ashkenazi's Declaration explains that:

even when amplification of a cancer marker gene does not result in significant over-expression of the corresponding gene product, this very absence of gene product over-expression still provides significant information for cancer diagnosis and treatment. Thus, if over-expression of the gene product does not parallel gene amplification in certain tumor types but does so in others, then parallel monitoring of gene amplification and gene product over-expression enables more accurate tumor classification and hence better determination of suitable therapy. In addition, absence of over-expression is crucial information for the practicing clinician. If a gene is amplified but the corresponding gene product is not over-expressed, the clinician accordingly will decide not to treat a patient with agents that target that gene product.

This is echoed in paragraph 6 of The Grimaldi Declaration (Exhibit B) where he explains "even in the rare case where the protein expression does not correlate with the mRNA

Appl. No. : 10/063,557
Filed : May 2, 2002

expression, this still provides significant information useful for cancer diagnosis and treatment...identification of both gene expression and protein expression enable more accurate tumor classification and hence better determination of suitable therapy."

Applicants therefore submit that simultaneous testing of gene expression (or gene amplification) and gene product expression enables more accurate tumor classification, even if the gene-product, the protein, is not over- or under-expressed. This leads to better determination of a suitable therapy.

This is further supported by the teachings in the article by Hanna and Mornin, submitted herewith. The article teaches that the HER-2/neu gene has been shown to be amplified and/or over-expressed in 10%-30% of invasive breast cancers and in 40-60% of intraductal breast carcinoma. Further, the article teaches that diagnosis of breast cancer includes testing both the amplification of the HER-2/neu gene (by FISH) as well as the over-expression of the HER-2/neu gene product (by IHC). Even when the protein is not over-expressed, the assay relying on both tests leads to a more accurate classification of the cancer and a more effective treatment of it.

The art indicates that, if expression of a gene is different in cancer as compared to normal tissue, it is more likely than not that the expression of the encoded protein will be different in cancer versus normal tissue. Even if there is no change in expression, a polypeptide encoded by a gene that is over- or under-expressed in cancer would still have utility in the detection of the disease. Thus, Applicants have demonstrated a credible, specific and substantial asserted utility for the PRO1069 polypeptide and antibodies against the PRO1069 polypeptide. Based on the evidence and arguments presented herein, one skilled in the art, at the time the application was filed, would know how to use the claimed antibodies.

Specific Utility

The PTO argues that even if substantial utility were found, there is no specific utility given for the antibody to the PRO1069 protein, since the antibody, as distinguished from the nucleic acid, has not been associated with any disease, condition, or any other specific feature. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Specific Utility is defined as utility which is "specific to the subject matter claimed," in contrast to "a general utility that would be applicable to the broad class of the invention." M.P.E.P. § 2107.01 I. Applicants submit that the evidence of under-expression of PRO1069 nucleic acids in certain types of cancer cells along with the declarations discussed above provide

Appl. No. : 10/063,557
Filed : May 2, 2002

a specific utility for the claimed antibodies to the protein. As stated above, the general, accepted understanding in the art is that if the expression of the gene is decreased in tumor cells, then the level of protein expression would also be decreased, and thus there is a correlation between nucleic acid levels and protein levels. This makes the PRO1069 protein and antibodies to it useful in detecting, diagnosing and further characterizing kidney tumor. As stated above, even if protein levels are not decreased, the PRO1069 proteins and antibodies are still useful in further characterizing the type of tumor. All of the substantial utilities listed above are specific to the disclosed antibodies to the PRO1069 protein because there is evidence that PRO1069 is underexpressed in certain cancer cells compared to normal cells. This is not a general utility that would apply to the broad class of antibodies.

Even if a prima facie case of lack of utility had been established, it should be withdrawn on consideration of the totality of evidence

Applicants have provided several expert opinions supporting the utility of the present invention. Applicants submit that one of ordinary skill in the art would have no legitimate basis to doubt the credibility of the statements made by Mr. Grimaldi, and Drs. Polakis and Ashkenazi, and must treat as true the statements made by these experts. Applicants remind the Examiner that “Office personnel must accept an opinion from a qualified expert that is based upon relevant facts whose accuracy is not being questioned; it is improper to disregard the opinion solely because of a disagreement over the significance or meaning of the facts offered.” PTO Utility Examination Guidelines (2001).

Thus, given the totality of the evidence provided, Applicants submit that they have established a specific and substantial credible utility for the claimed antibodies as a diagnostic agent. According to the PTO Utility Examination Guidelines (2001), irrefutable proof of a claimed utility is not required. Rather, a specific and substantial credible utility requires only a “reasonable” confirmation of a real world context of use. Applicants submit that they have established that it is more likely than not that one of skill in the art would reasonably accept the utility for the antibodies to the PRO1069 polypeptide set forth in the specification. In view of the above, Applicants respectfully request that the PTO reconsider and withdraw the utility rejections under 35 U.S.C. §101 and 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph.

35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph

Appl. No. : 10/063,557
Filed : May 2, 2002

The Examiner rejected Claims 1-6 as indefinite for the recitation of “an antibody that binds” and an “antibody that specifically binds”. Claim 6 has been cancelled and Claim 1 amended to recite “specifically binds”. Applicants submit that the term “specifically binds” has a well established meaning; it refers to the binding of an antibody to a particular polypeptide, where the antibody does not substantially bind to any other polypeptide. One of skill in the art would readily understand the language of the claims to mean that the claimed antibodies bind to specifically defined polypeptides (in this case the polypeptides of SEQ ID NO:50) but DO NOT substantially bind to any other polypeptides. Since claim terms should be given their ordinary, art-recognized meaning, the present rejection is believed to be misplaced, and should be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph - Enablement

The PTO rejected Claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to make and/or use the invention. The PTO correctly cites *Ex Parte Forman* and the factors set forth therein to determine whether undue experimentation is required. However, Applicants respectfully submit that the PTO’s conclusions are not in line with the teachings of *Forman*.

For example, given the recent advances in the science of molecular biology, the unpredictability of this art has lessened significantly. As a result, the number of experiments necessary to determine a particular result is now low, and these experiments have become routine in the art. The PTO concedes that the level of skill in this art is very high, and thus ordinary artisans are expected to be adept in various methodologies in this art and practice them routinely.

The Examiner has cited several references which appear to indicate that expression of mRNA does not necessarily correlate with nor predict equivalent levels of polypeptide expression. Applicants have provided several additional references which show that expression of mRNA does in fact correlate with equivalent levels of polypeptide expression. Applicants remind the Examiner that *absolute certainty* is not required. The Applicants believe that the arguments, declarations and references cited by Applicant in support of its position and discussed above make clear that evidence of underexpression of the PRO1069 gene in cancer is significant, and that the general understanding of those of skill in the art is that *it is more likely than not* that gene expression levels and protein expression levels are correlated. One of ordinary skill in the

Appl. No. : 10/063,557
Filed : May 2, 2002

art would conclude that *more likely than not*, the PRO1069 proteins and antibodies have a specific and substantial use in the diagnosis and characterization of cancer cells. This would include, for example, the use of the antibodies to the PRO1069 protein for the diagnosis of cancer or further characterization of cancer cells. Use of the antibodies as a diagnostic tool is disclosed in the application, and the techniques for the use of antibodies to detect the presence of specific proteins in tissue are well-known and routine in the art. Thus, at least one use of the antibodies to the PRO1069 protein is adequately enabled, which is all that is required – “if any use is enabled when multiple uses are disclosed, the application is enabling for the claimed invention” (M.P.E.P. § 2164.01(c)).

Further, the Federal Circuit in *Noelle v. Lederman* (355 F.3d 1343 (Fed. Cir. 2004)), confirmed that “as long as an applicant has disclosed a ‘fully characterized antigen,’ either by its structure, formula, chemical name, or physical properties, or by depositing the protein in a public depository, the applicant can then claim an antibody by its binding affinity to that described antigen” (emphasis in original). Since the PRO1069 antigen has been fully characterized, Applicants are entitled to claims directed to antibodies capable of binding to PRO1069.

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the enablement rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and §103(a)

The Examiner rejected Claims 1-2 and 4-6 as anticipated by Lal et al (WO 00/00610, published 1/6/00). The Examiner states that Lal et al. teach a polypeptide SEQ ID NO:35 which is identical to SEQ ID NO:50 and antibodies that bind the polypeptide. The Examiner has also rejected Claims 1-6 as unpatentable over Lal et al. in view of Queen et al.

Because of the allegations of the lack of utility for the claimed invention, the Examiner has accorded an effective priority date for this application of its instant filing date. Consequently, the Examiner has cited certain references as prior art against the instant claims and have alleged that the claims are unpatentable in view of these references. Applicants respectfully traverse.

As noted above, Applicants are entitled to the effective filing date of August 24, 2000. The gene expression data was disclosed in PCT/US00/23328, filed August 24, 2000. The pending claims are therefore fully entitled to the priority of August 24, 2000.

Appl. No. : 10/063,557
Filed : May 2, 2002

The cited Lal et al. reference published January 6, 2000. As this date is not more than one year prior to the effective filing date of the present application, Lal et al. is not prior art under § 102(b), and cannot be used as prior art under § 103. Applicants respectfully submit that the cited Lal et al. reference is not available as prior art, and therefore request that the rejections under 35 USC §§102 and 103 be withdrawn.

Conclusion

The present application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and action to that effect is respectfully solicited. Applicants invite the Examiner to call the undersigned if any issues may be resolved by telephone.

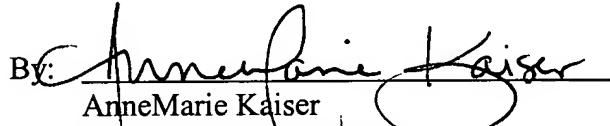
Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

KNOBBE, MARTENS, OLSON & BEAR, LLP

Dated: August 13, 2004

By:


AnneMarie Kaiser
Registration No. 37,649
Attorney of Record
Customer No. 30,313
(619) 235-8550